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Weekly Newspaper of the Year 2011

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FORMER MAYOR ARRESTED AFTER DEFENDING LAND AGAINST GYPSIES

Councillor condemns police for handling of situation

Exclusive by Iain Johnson

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THE FORMER Mayor of Brentwood was arrested for breaching the peace after defending a field from an illegal invasion by gypsies.

Councillor David Tee has condemned the way five police constables handled the travelling group's invasion on to Childerditch Common last week, which left him feeling shocked and "humiliated".

Mr Tee, a lay preacher at nearby Warley Church, said he is not "anti-traveller" but was angry with the police for allowing more travellers on to the common than they had initially permitted.

Powers

He has joined his party colleagues in calling for the police to use powers under Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which allows trespassing travellers to be moved on immediately from private land or face arrest.

The gypsies were moved on from the common on Friday last week after police issued a 48-hour notice to leave.

Mr Tee, 73, claimed that police gave permission for three travellers' caravans to drive on to the field. He said one PC attempted to force him to the ground before



MAKING A STAND: Former Mayor of Brentwood David Tee with a copy of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

handcuffing him after he protested when a fourth vehicle made a move to enter the field.

"I was shocked that they would have considered arresting me," he said. "How could the young PC feel it appropriate to try and push me to the ground? I felt humiliated."

He was also left baffled during the 45-minute incident after he said one

of the officers claimed they had been escorting the 50 travellers to the common after they had been moved on from land at the Brentwood Centre earlier that day.

Mr Tee had arrived at the common shortly after 7pm on Wednesday after receiving a phone call from a resident at the Greyhound Pub.



ILLEGAL STOP: Travellers on Childerditch Common

The Conservative ward member for Warley believes passionately that protecting the field, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is his duty.

Although he was later de-arrested after two senior police officers from Harlow arrived at the scene, Mr Tee is not demanding an apology for the mix-up.

He said that any such gesture would be common courtesy.

A spokesman for Essex Police said: "The man was arrested to prevent a breach of the peace. Attempts were made by officers to engage with the man in the first instance but he was arrested after these attempts were unsuccessful."

He was arrested as a last resort and later de-arrested once the incident had subsided.

Travellers setting up camp
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Teen rider threatened with knife by robbers

A TEENAGER was robbed at knifepoint and had his motorbike stolen.

The attack took place along a footpath near Princes Road, Brentwood, between 9.30pm and 10.30pm on June 25.

The 16-year-old boy had stopped after running out of fuel when a man held a knife to his throat while another loaded the bike into a car. The men then drove off.

The boy was left shaken, but unharmed.

The bike was a black KX 140F M2R motocross machine.

Both men were described as white.

The first was about 25 years old and spoke with an Irish accent.

He had short dark, ginger hair and wore a grey T-shirt, grey tracksuit bottoms and white trainers.

Frightening

The second man spoke with an Essex accent was slightly tanned, of chubby build, aged about 18 to 20 years old, with short dark hair, about 5ft 11in tall. He wore a dark blue polo-style T-shirt, dark blue tracksuit bottoms, black trainers and a farmer's cap.

The suspect's vehicle was described as an old-style, silver Mitsubishi L200, with green writing on the side of the door.

Det Sgt Jamie Gingell, of Essex Police, said: "This was a particularly frightening experience for the young lad who was minding his own business."

"Crimes of this nature are rare in the Brentwood area, and we are very keen to apprehend the offenders as soon as possible."

■ Anyone with information should contact DC Andy Bain, on 0300 3334444, or call Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

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Former mayor is arrested

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illegally can be removed under Section 61. However, the new policy is clear that this power should not be the first consideration. The travellers agreed they would move by 2pm the following day, which they did.

"No damage was caused and there were no public order issues. It is common practice for police to follow travellers who have just been moved off land to see where they settle in case

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there are any further issues. We would under no circumstances escort them to any other land."

When asked whether Essex Police would be issuing Mr Tee an apology, the spokesman said: "Officers from Essex Police are liaising with the arrested man in relation to the circumstances. The appropriateness of the police response is also being reviewed. It is unfortunate that this incident concluded in this way."